



The Wedding Machine

Beth Webb Hart

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It's *Steel Magnolias* meets *The Runaway Bride* with a Southern fiction flair sure to appeal to fans of Sue Monk Kidd.

The weddings of Jasper, South Carolina, have been run for years by four women respectfully dubbed "The Wedding Machine." This summer the daughters and sons of these four women are each being "married off" (to some unlikely characters!) and the gears of the machine begin to grind to a surprising halt.

The Wedding Machine Details

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Christa says

This was a touching and poignant book. It is about friendship and other relationships. The Wedding Machine is the story of four friends, Ray, Hilda, Kitty B., and Sis, who have been together since high school and have had great influence on one another. They have stood by each other through all of the various joys and heartaches of life, and together they are "The Wedding Machine," as they plan and oversee the weddings of their southern community. This book is the story of both happy times and the trials of life. The book is told in the third person, and each chapter is named for one of the characters and focuses on her. The primary part of the story is carried out as the women are in their mid-fifties, but the story has many flashbacks to other times in their lives. The book is filled with many characters including spouses and children of the four friends. The book shows how the four friends have very different lives from one another, most of which they could not have imagined when they were together in high school. The characters were not always likeable, but it made them all the more human. This book was a fast and interesting read, and the time spent on it was enjoyable.

Jen says

I really liked this book!

Hart tells the story of 4 women (Hilda, Ray, Sis * Katie Rae); the story follows these women from when they were teens through adulthood.

The story follows them as they get married, have kids of their own, and then prepare for the weddings of their kids.

It is a quick read, enjoyable read.

Lindsey (Books for Christian Girls) says

Yeah, uh, no. Not for teens. I picked this book up over a year ago and set it right back down since the Prologue was so confusing. This time I made it to the first chapter (okay, technically I skimmed to get there, but still). The prologue has mentions and gifts for a soon-to-be-married women (lingerie and uh, *other* things) and the first chapter starts off with talking about menopause and *things*. So, not for teens.

Dona says

This book was a big disappointment. I read a lot of Christian fiction and this was an awful example. I was shocked that it made this list. I read a novel a day and I really thought this book was poorly written and should be listed as just fiction. It was like the author wants to make the book a Christian story but has to put worldly junk in to please another group. It just doesn't fit.

Lacy Lovett says

Working my way through this-- I'm currently stuck on the idea that the author has that gardenias are still in bloom in deer season, which they're not. I live in South Carolina and have lots of gardenias. Maybe they're a different variety, since apparently the ones in the book are less fragrant than jasmine? When mine are in bloom, they're ALL you smell. Maybe she has loads and loads of jasmine. But that still doesn't explain having them blooming in the wrong season.

Even though I understand why she did it (to differentiate between flashback and current story), I'm finding the constant shifting in tenses (from past to present to past) jarring. The story would flow better if she kept it all past tense, the way most books are written. The flashbacks flow better because the reader doesn't have to fight that present tense oddness that only crops up part of the time. It's hard enough to read in present tense and stay there, but it's even more difficult to not be able to settle into it.

Still searching for a story line and something that seems genuine. I've gone looking for definitions of a couple of her "southern" terms she uses, and can't find them. Did she make them up? Or spell them oddly? The internet's a big place...

Kw says

There is much to like in this book - the characters, the customs, the essentials and the no-nos of their lives, plus the events as they unfold.

However, I am very disappointed that this was endorsed by Women of Faith. I know we don't all have the same convictions, but this is a book I'd be ashamed to see in my church's huge library of Christian Fiction. Add to that the fact that while some of the writing is lovely, some of it seems to have popped out of a blender - phrase by phrase, arranged in the most peculiar ways. Commas would have helped some of these sentences, but others simply needed to be rearranged. I decided the author was European and English her second language, until I looked her up on the internet.

So do people in SC really call patios "piazzas?" That seems so odd, but whatever . . .

Nikki says

I always enjoy books about female friendships. Being set in the South is a bonus. I liked this book, but felt at times it was a little slow moving. I also had a hard time keeping the characters straight. I was getting confused on who was whose children, and whose spouse was whose. There certainly have been other books in this genre that I have liked more. That being said it was still pretty good.

Ashley Abbott says

The beginning of the book was hard to get thru as it took me a while to really connect with the characters. But midway thru it started to pick up and I found myself wanting to know what happened next. Surprised it

was a Women of Faith book but in a way I am kinda glad as it (as well as Adelaide Piper) is not conventional christian fiction. It's not sugary sweet like some Chic-lit and has a few "rough" edges to it.

Katie Browning says

I preferred Hart's *Love, Charleston* to *The Wedding Machine*. This book had some of the same flavor as *Love, Charleston* but seemed geared for middle aged women. It did, however, give me a new perspective of the challenges that middle aged women go through. I found the bonds of friendship weaker in this one, as friends didn't know the basic backgrounds of each other, which seemed to defeat some of the purpose of the story.

~mad says

I've read other books by Beth Webb Hart and this is equally as good!

Set in a small town near Charleston - group of middle aged women who grew up there since junior high. Now their own daughters are getting married and they are still planning weddings, just like they have planned weddings, funerals, parties all these past years - pooled their chin and silver and know-how to pull off beautiful events.

The Weeding Machine is a celebration of lifelong friendships - something "we girls" from Lanier H.S. know something about - don't we Hens?

A thoroughly enjoyable book!

I highly recommend!

Megan says

I totally didn't notice that this is a "Women of Faith" book until I got home from the library. Since I just went to this conference with my Mom, I figure it is meant to be!

Okay, so this is a good one. I liked everything about the book with one exception. All of the characters (except one) were good and relatable. All of the stories lines worked nicely (except one). It all wrapped up the way I wanted it to (except one). I guess that "one" is fairly realistic, but I wasn't reading this for a dose of realism.

Elizabeth Allen says

I love books like this. Felt like I knew the characters. There is a southern gentility that is almost lost now and

I appreciate the way the book "understands" those women who try to keep it alive. The title is deceiving and makes the book sound light, but the real struggles of the characters were anything but that and often moved me to tears.

Bridget Bailey says

This is the first book by Beth Webb Hart that i have read and I truly enjoyed it. There is something about the south and how they do things that is so intriguing. This book was easy to read and great to follow the 4 women in their lives. This was not as predictable as many other chick lit books can be which made it refreshing. The one thing I didn't like is that it felt like it was rushed. Things happened rather quickly in the book when more time should have past.

Angie says

I really would like to give this book 2.5 stars. This book is endorsed by Women of Faith. As such, I expected a stronger inspirational, perhaps even evangelistic, component to this novel. I was greatly disappointed in that respect. The book is largely a several-months look into the lives of four middle-aged Southern women who have been friends since high school and who have significant unresolved life issues. It is quite accurate to describe this book as a coming-of-age novel for the middle-aged. The main character, Ray, experiences two epiphanies at the end of the book, and I appreciated them. Both are messages society needs to hear. However, as I said, I had expected much greater things - in terms of spirituality and humor - from this book. I don't plan to keep it for re-reading later.

Beth Dean says

This is a very sweet book. I'm a sucker for books centered around a group of girlfriends just living their lives. I like to think about someone writing a book about my group of girlfriends.

There were an awful lot of characters to take in at the beginning. It was a little hard to remember which husband belonged to whom and which kids belonged to which woman. Took me several chapters to get it all sorted out.

It made me want to get married again, or at least plan a wedding! My sister needs to get to work on this!! And the food!!! I think I should have been born in the South, let me just say that!
